



depopulation of the world by his religious wars.<sup>1</sup> The ecclesiastical writers themselves denounce the imperial couple of "Christian" propagandists, whose very differences and discords added to the general miseries.<sup>2</sup> "They seemed not human, but some malignant form of demonic existence sent to plague mankind."<sup>3</sup> Yet all their barbarity failed to eradicate Paganism, which was destined to reappear in a more powerful form than ever, when the gigantic empire of Islam arose among the outposts of the empire, and drove back the advancing tide of Christianity from some of its fairest portions. Nor must we forget that this new form of Paganism not only drew under the shelter of its wings some of the best elements of Christianity,<sup>4</sup> as well as of Mazdeism, but also contained within itself principles, spiritual and ethical, at least as elevated as the degenerate church of the later Roman empire.

In truth, the fall of the Byzantine as well as that of the Persian State illustrates the destiny of politico-religious systems based on the authority of Will.<sup>5</sup> Justinian and his successors absorbed all those duties which truly educate the citizen, into absolute personal government, directed by the absolutism of a monarchical Church, whose sovereign will they claimed to represent. Justin, Maurice, Phocas, Heraclius, some of them really good and able men, all pursued the same policy of unifying the religious beliefs of the empire by the often barbarous exercise of despotic will; and so the destruction of all those broad national sympathies and institutions by which a people are trained to obey good laws and confide in those who administer them, went on in spite of every virtuous effort by the ruler to reconcile his system with the public good.<sup>6</sup> When the

<sup>1</sup> Procopius: *Historia Arcana*, xviii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Nestorian schools of Syria, after their expulsion by Justinian, and then by Leo the Isaurian.

<sup>5</sup> Procopius: *Historia Arcana*, xxx.

<sup>6</sup> See the striking picture of these tendencies in Finlay's *Greece under the Romans*. Zeller: *Entretiens sur l'histoire*, x.



Persian empire neared its fall, it had gone through similar disintegrating phases, not so much from the absolutism of orthodoxy as from the weakness of monarchs who failed to justify the popular demand for heroic personal ideals. The logic of human nature brought a common result to both. But a new and stronger will than royal vicegerent of Ormuzd or of Christ appeared in the Allah of Islam, whose decrees wrought in his servant's will with the resistless power of Fate.

There is indeed another side to this picture of Justinian, which has doubtless been colored by partisan feeling. His private habits seem to have been pure,<sup>1</sup> and his passions under control. There are evidences of real humanity in his re-enactment of Constantine's law against gladiatorial shows; and his literary and artistic tastes were proved by a multitude of public works, as well as by his constant intercourse, within the limits of his creed, with men of high culture in every department of thought and action. In all these respects he is not discredited by comparison with his great contemporary. He was a centre of illustrious men; his great architect Anthemius, his great jurist Tribonian, his great generals Belisarius and Narses, his great historian Procopius, were a glory of which any emperor might be proud. Above all, the devotion of the great legal talent of the age to the codification of Roman law out of the confused heap of traditions, decisions, and special codes gathered from the writings of forty civilians, and the concentration of two thousand treatises into fifty books; the separation of all these data into their historical elements and order of growth, and the stamping of the whole with the fruits of Roman civilization in the jurisprudence of his own time, — this marvellous substructure of the legislation of the modern civilized world is an achievement which

<sup>1</sup> It will not do to attach too much confidence to the strange revelations of Procopius, in his *Secret Memoirs*, which differ so utterly from his *Public History* of the Emperor.



may well immortalize the names of all who had share in its accomplishment. For the public spirit, the persevering energy, the legal acumen and research required for this vast undertaking, the praise belongs to Justinian and the great lawyers whom he selected for it, — especially to Tribonian, the master-spirit of the whole. But that which constitutes the immortal value of the Pandects and the Code does not belong to that age, or to its ruling spirits in government or law. Their best was not the work of Christian emperors. Their limitations to the “*patria potestas* ;” their steps towards testamentary justice, towards the emancipation of women and of slaves; their broad recognition of the *jus gentium* or laws of universal application as distinguished from the privileges of Roman descent or rights of conquest, — whatever gives breadth and permanent value to this monument of jurisprudence was mainly the work of a nobler and freer age, the product of the spirit infused into Roman law by the great Stoic school, centuries previous, when they brought the equity of their philosophical “*Law of Nature*” to bear upon the accumulating laws of nations and the praetorian edicts by which these were administered as nearly as possible upon a common basis; and not only upon these, but upon the civil law of the Roman State, as developed through successive ages and codes.<sup>1</sup> The effect of this grand ethical conception of Stoicism was the rapid adjustment of laws to universal principles of justice and the rights and duties of humanity. The great age of Roman jurisprudence covers the reigns of Hadrian and the Antonines.<sup>2</sup> The imperial constitutions which succeeded that period are marked by reaction to despotic sway, and by increasing servility in the construction and interpretation of laws. And the treatment of this nobler legislation by Justinian

<sup>1</sup> See Maine's *Ancient Law*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Woolsey's *Introduction to Roman Law*.

and his supple parliament of jurists was in full keeping with these accepted requirements of the interests of the State. Besides avoiding the freer and purer spirits of the old republic, they corrupted the records of these best days of the empire, and blotted out the noblest statutes, which they dared not indorse. And so unscrupulously was this done, that "the contradictions of the Code and Pandects still exercise the patience and subtilty of modern civilians."<sup>1</sup> How far the same hands are responsible for the disappearance of the greater portion of the literature and data of Roman jurisprudence is uncertain; the charge of a deliberate purpose to destroy what did not suit the despotic aims of Justinian has no other ground than the suppression and corruption already mentioned. But the work which was to supersede them came very near to sharing their fate; and it is said that all the manuscripts of the Pandects are derived from one original, preserved with devout care in the palace of the Florentine republic.<sup>2</sup>

The jurisprudence of Justinian was in fact no exception to the general spirit of his reign. Whatever the opportunities, afforded by his grand survey of national experience, he discovered no means of staying the degeneracy of Roman civilization. As compared with Constantinople at this period, Persia was a country of order and law. The horrible anarchy of the circus, with its incessant bloodshed and sensuality (so vividly described by Gibbon),<sup>3</sup> stimulated to its worst excesses by the emperor's own eager support and encouragement of the most barbarous of the factions,<sup>4</sup> was unparalleled in any heathen land. In the ferocious brawl of the Nika sedition, the best part of the city was ravaged and burned by the savage factions of the Blues and Greens, and thirty thousand persons slaughtered, — a carnage suppressed only by the vigor

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, chap. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xl.

<sup>4</sup> See Zeller's account of the massacre of the Nika (*Entretiens sur l'histoire*), chap. x.



of Belisarius. Yet these factions were deliberately encouraged by the imperial champions of Christianity and law. The long, lingering decay of the Byzantine empire, — plucked by barbarians and assailed by Turks, torn by political and religious factions, by strife with Rome and Alexandria, crazed with theological disputes, — was one wretched commingling of rebellion, assassination, and distraction, dominated only by the insane endeavor to enforce uniformity of religious belief. The military and administrative genius of Heraclius furnished the only check upon this headlong descent. And when Persia fell under the sway of Islam, a future of intellectual and political greatness opened upon her, in striking contrast with the melancholy spectacle of this servile empire, the bequest of Justinian to his Church and his laws.

The fierce intolerance of Justinian, though in extreme contrast with the spirit of his Persian rival, was entirely in accordance with that of most Sassanian kings. Mazdeism, like Judaism and Christianity, could not tolerate a different object of worship from its own, because this object of its worship was a single personal Will, ruling its worshippers by direct command. The bitter exclusiveness of the Persian Mobads betrayed itself whenever they were intrusted by their kings with power, as invariably as did that of the Christian priesthood and Moslem orthodox upon a like opportunity. The Sassanian line began with an exterminating warfare upon all unbelievers in Ahura, whose holiness could not endure the presence of these servants of Ahriman; and their successors, for the most part, followed in the same track. From this intolerance the Jews were excepted, almost always continuing on good terms with the Persians, partly from a common veneration for the name of Cyrus, and partly from the very intensity of exclusiveness common to Ahura and Jahveh, which, combined with great ethical resemblance, strongly suggested



that they were one and the same God. The comparative weakness of the Jews and their hatred of Rome were also points of attraction for the Sassanian monarchs, who found Christianity far more dangerous than Judaism, and especially after its ascension to the throne of the Cæsars. Shapûr I., the great conqueror, was believed, from the inscription at Haji-Abad, to have embraced Christianity; but the reading has been shown by Haug to be erroneous. That he first encouraged Mani and then banished him, is uncertain tradition; that the great heretic returned, to be put to death by Varahrân II., is not improbable.<sup>1</sup> Shapûr II. was persecuting the Christians when Constantine came to the throne. Yezdegerd I., converted to Christianity, falls into deadly strife with the Magi, and is called "the Wicked;" then recurring to Mazdeism, he inflicts barbarous penalty on the Christians for five years. Varahrân I. puts them to torture. Yezdegerd II. imposes Mazdeism by force on the Armenian church (450 A.D.), and having quelled the revolt of Vartan, makes martyrs of all who would not recant. Khosrû II., professing Christianity, devout slave of the Virgin and of St. Michael, and husband of a Christian woman, surrendered Jerusalem to the ferocity of Jewish and Persian priests, who massacred or banished the whole Christian population, on pretence of punishing them for hiding "the true cross."

That this chronic intolerance proceeded from the nature of personal Will as the ideal of worship, is evident from the fact that these Sassanian kings, so far from being men of cruel disposition were generally, in civil affairs, benevolent and just. To Hormazd I. is ascribed the institution of a court for trying complaints of the poor against the rich, over which he often presided. The chief persecutor of Christian-

<sup>1</sup> Although the savage cruelty of his execution, as described by Tabari (Nöldeke, p. 47), is probably a fiction, at any rate Manichæism was fiercely persecuted, though in no wise put down.



ity, Varahrân V., was held a model king in his treatment of his people, and in his regard for arts, sciences, and all the functions of the State.<sup>1</sup> Pêrôz, also intolerant, remitted all taxes during a seven years' drought, distributed corn and money, and used every expedient for the preservation of his people. Shapûr II., as bitter in his treatment of Christianity as he was heroic in his wars against Arabia and Rome, is credited with such maxims as these: "Words may be refreshing as the rain or sharp as a sword." "A spear may be drawn out of a wound, but a harsh word cannot be plucked out of a wounded heart." Yezdegerd I. said that the wisest king is he who never punishes in anger, and follows his first impulse to reward the good.

The obscure history of Mazdak and his school of communists is a striking illustration of our position, that Sassanian severities in religion were consistent with a considerable degree of social and political freedom. This Mazdak admitted the national faith, but added a system of communism, abolishing marriage and property, and otherwise threatening the destruction of the whole social order. His following increased, till it became necessary to suppress the whole movement by the uprising of the better classes of the community. The king himself, Kobâd I., was infatuated with doctrines which would have swept away all royal government in an hour, and had to be dethroned. Restored by a Tartar army, he resumed his crown, forgiving his opponents, and discouraging the subversive school of Mazdak. Yet so deep-rooted was the evil, that Khosrû on his accession is said to have been obliged to suppress it by putting to death a hundred thousand persons. How much of historical truth is contained in these traditions is uncertain. But the fact is unquestionable, that this revolutionary system had been suffered to reach wide diffusion before it was put down by force; and such dif-

<sup>1</sup> See especially Firdûsî's *Bakrâm-gour*.



fusion implies a free circulation and discussion of social theories, and a power of association among the working classes, which we should hardly expect to find in that period or in an Oriental State. The protests against luxury and monopoly ascribed to Mazdak, his puritanism in diet and dress, and general preaching of self-restraint, hardly comport with the excesses which his followers are said to have committed against decency, property, and peace.

On the other hand, the persecution of the Manichæan heresy, both in the East and the West, grew directly out of the religious motive we have already described.



CSL

PHILOSOPHIES.



I.

MANICHÆISM.



## MANICHÆISM.

THE invincible exclusiveness of Mazdean will-worship was conspicuous in its treatment of Mani, who represented a natural growth of its own dualistic ideas, but combined these with a wide eclecticism, the equally natural result of the intrusion of numerous races and religions upon the soil of Iran. All tradition is agreed that Mani had attained the largest culture possible in his day. He was an astronomer, a physicist, a musician, and an artist of eminence, who could use his gifts with great effect, not only to charm the public taste, but to illustrate his own written thought. He had mastered the faith, first of the Magi, then of the Christians, and had travelled far and wide to the cradle-lands of other and older religions. It is not improbable that the eastern legend of his having sent out three apostles — Addas, Thomas, and Hermas — towards different quarters of the world, and of his personal relations with Scythianus and Terebinthus or Buddas (names that have no historic meaning, except as types of the Egyptian and Indian religions),<sup>1</sup> is simply the mythical expression of his eclectic method and wide religious sympathies.<sup>2</sup> Some of the early Fathers connect him with Brahmanism.<sup>3</sup> His followers identified him with Christ, Buddha, Zoroaster, and Mithra, and believed that all these religious names meant the one solar Deity.<sup>4</sup> His acquaintance with the Jewish Cabala and the Gnostic masters, who for a century had been constructing heretical systems

<sup>1</sup> Archelaus: *Disputatio cum Manote*, c. 51, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Lassen: *Ind. Alterth.*, iii. 405. Colditz: *Die Entstehung d. Manich.* (1837).

<sup>3</sup> Ephrem Syrus, and Epiphanius.

<sup>4</sup> Herbelot: *Bibliothèque Orientale* — Mani.



out of the combination of Syrian and Greek ideas with Christian faith, was complete. In his large survey, he rejected no belief by reason of prejudice against the system of which it formed a part. The asceticism and metempsychosis of the Brahman; the emanation and emancipation of the Buddhist; the mystical and prophetic element even in that Judaism whose Jahveh was in his belief a delusion and snare to man; the Dualism of the Persians, and the Saviour of the Christians, though under forms which materially differed from those of their respective orthodox creeds, — all entered into an elaborate system which seemed to be devised for meeting the largest number of special wants in an age of many conflicting religions and philosophical schools. When we add that he appeared in Persia at a time when two parties had arisen in the Mazdean church, — the one strongly dualistic, the other seeking to place a distinctly supreme unity beyond the two ethical contraries, — and that his own system took an intermediate ground, in some respects differing from both, in some agreeing with one or the other, — there seems to be no sufficient reason for doubting, as the historian of Gnosticism has done,<sup>1</sup> that Mani really purposed to construct a universal system out of the ferment of beliefs in his time. I cannot agree with Matter that this was unnatural in a philosopher of that age and country. On the contrary, circumstances seemed to make it the most natural thing in the world; and the probability is heightened by the remarkable union of imaginative and rationalistic elements in the system itself.

This is the higher significance of Manichæism, and affords the true point of view for explaining the extreme intolerance with which it was pursued by the three great religions, — Mazdeism, Judaism, and Christianity. The war waged against it was a war of narrow dogmatism against

<sup>1</sup> Matter: *Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme*, iii. 73.



universal tendencies, however imperfect their expression, however distorted by the false lights of the day. Through all historical doubts and conflicting details the one fact stands fast,—that wherever Mani appeared, or his system found foothold, they were persecuted with a ferocity unexampled even in the ancient world.<sup>1</sup> We must ascribe this fact to the boldness and breadth of his eclecticism; to the promise of his method to solve all religious problems by a Gnostic insight beyond and above all outward revelation by church or book; to its rationalistic criticism of the current grounds of belief; and to the seeming claims of the new apostle or paraclete to rival the head of the Christian Church, and to supersede Zoroaster and Moses,—to all of whom he seemed to give a recognition by accepting just so much of every system as would give him a hearing with its disciples, while subtly undermining it by a more stringent logic and a refusal of implicit faith. Firdûsî reports Mani as saying that his painting proved him a prophet, and asserts that he was put to death for his *image-worship*. Only these signs of a larger mental scope and freedom can account for the peculiar violence which marked the Manichæan persecutions down to the Middle Ages, when the name was applied to numerous heresies as the very strongest term of hatred and reproach. By the necessity of their belief, and by the confession of the best of their opponents, the Manichæans were pure in their morals; and the charges brought against them were precisely those of which the Christians had reason to know the worthlessness from their own experience of the same. Libanius the rhetorician, in his appeal to Constantine on their behalf, describes them as scattered over many countries of the earth, injuring none, but suffering injuries from many; abstemious, and counting death a gain.<sup>2</sup> Yet not

<sup>1</sup> Spiegel: *Erân. Alterth.*, ii. Neander: *Church History*, ii. 770.

<sup>2</sup> Neander: *Church History*, ii. 768.



only was Mani cruelly put to death by Varahrân the Sassanian king, but the Christian emperors from Constantine to Justinian, with but one or two exceptions, tried perpetually to exterminate the sect. They were burned at the stake by Vandals in Africa, and by Catholic Christians in Europe for six centuries.<sup>1</sup> Augustine, converted from their communion to Christianity, turned upon them with all the bitter and arbitrary injustice of which his passionate nature was capable. And later Christian apologists have argued *a priori* the necessity of immorality, as a result of the Manichæan belief in the physical unreality of the Christ and in the impurity of the senses and sexual relations; unable to see that the very same tendencies were important factors in Christian faith, and led not only to the exaltation of Jesus above all laws and conditions of matter, but to the meritoriousness of celibacy and the monastic life. In the same way the division of Manichæan believers into the two classes of "hearers" and "elect" has been supposed to justify the same charges, in face of precisely similar distinctions in the Christian Church from the beginning to the present day! The Sassanians persecuted a Dualism which was the logical issue of their own creed, and the Jews a Cabalism which in substance they could find in their Talmud.

Such evil treatment of a system which sought to find points of sympathy with every one of the great religions of the world, becomes the more remarkable the more fully these points are appreciated. It must be remembered that Mani claimed to be a Christian, and that he was thoroughly a Gnostic, and in some points even a Judaistic, Christian. In his depreciation of the senses, though Mani forsook the first principle of Mazdeism, yet he was very far from anti-Christian. Even his Dualism, Mazdean in substance, was almost equally in accordance with Christianity, in which

<sup>1</sup> Trace this in Jortin's *Ecclesiastical History*.



Satan corresponded to his Evil Principle, dominating man till deliverance should come in the Christ. The light shining in the darkness, which comprehended it not, was the substance of both Alexandrian and Catholic theology, the soul of the Gospel of John as well as of the Avesta; and the emancipation of the Good Principle was as positively predicted by Mani as the triumph of Christ in the Gospels, or of Ahura in the Avesta. Nor is it easy to see how the developed creed of Christianity could have objected to Manichæan Dualism as a religious dogma, since the Christian God was admitted to be unable to eradicate evil from the universe, and his unity had slipped into trinity, and this had so verged upon tritheism as to fill the Church with irreconcilable contradiction and contention.

But these very points of resemblance did but aggravate the intense and peculiar hatred of the three great religions to Manichæism as the most intolerable of heresies. And for this there was a reason common to all three. They were all religions of personal Will. Jahveh, Ahura, Christ, were absolute sovereigns, whose laws, as personal commandments, permitted no rival authority, no suspense of faith, no balance of reasoning. In each of these religions an omnipotent Will, consciously engaged on the affairs of men, was the centre of all motive, the sum of all rights and claims. Creation was simply the act of that Will; sin was violation of its command; hell was the consequence of its wrath; heaven was the reward of its approval. What man was and was to be, what right and wrong meant, resulted directly from its determinations; and would have been other than they are, had these been different. This absorption of all being into the sovereignty of Will made each of the three contending religions essentially intolerant. It must deal with all other religions as rivals and foes; and the more bitterly, the closer these seemed to be to its own communion. For reasons already



given, Judaism and Mazdeism came to an accommodation without change of face. Between Judaism and Christianity the hatred was mutual and made irreconcilable by ages of Christian persecution, — perhaps the blackest page of religious bigotry in the whole history of man, all in consequence of supposed crimes against the person of Christ. No peace ever dawned on the hates of Christianity and Mazdeism, symbolized in the eternal strife of Persia and Rome. But a mightier Will swallowed the will of Ahura; and then came for Christianity another and more deadly conflict, lasting for ages, till at last Allah and Christ are stilled by the new world-forces which command that religion shall cease to be the worship of wills, and become the worship of universal principles and laws.

More intolerable, however, to Christianity than any outside rival personality was a system which arose within its own household in rebellion against the authority not of Christ only, but of Will itself. The system of Mani substituted principles for persons. This was the real though scarcely recognized secret of the hate and fear. It was the handwriting on the wall predicting death to arbitrary will in the name of reason, and instinctively the Church sprang to efface it. It is admitted that Mani was true to his Iranian origin in his ready spring from abstractions to concrete forms;<sup>1</sup> that his conception of world-processes and cosmic powers was dramatic, so that light and darkness were not only opposite substances, but living powers contending in space. But this was only the superficial poetic dress. He emphasized principles, and gave them a logical development inconsistent with personal caprice. He used Dualism not as the conflict of two opposite wills, one of which must triumph by the destruction of the other, but as the organic structure of the world, whereof all personal life is but the

<sup>1</sup> Spiegel has noticed this, but fails to see the deeper impersonality on which it rests. *Erân. Alterth.*, ii. 206.



temporary expression. He laid the basis of his creed not in intentional and positive commands, but in the logic of essential causes. A true Gnostic, he put reason for outward revelation, philosophy for special providence, and creation itself was but a single sequence in the evolution of the inherent relation of good and evil. This rationalism was his unpardonable sin; and his eclecticism, pressing elements of all creeds into his service, not to aggrandize a special God, but to work out his principles on the broadest human scale, was simply an aggravation of it. We may here briefly illustrate our statement, before proceeding to that larger demonstration which its novelty may seem to require.

Light and Darkness, or Good and Evil, in the Manichæan system, although defined respectively as spirit and matter, were not distinguished as spiritual and material in our sense of those terms. Light was not separated, as purely conscious mind, from Darkness, as dead elemental substance. The moral distinction of good and evil controlled that difference. Although coarser and cruder than light, darkness was not confined to bodies; although more spiritual than darkness, light was not confined to spirits. The two opposites were Principles, without beginning and without end. The will of the Manichæan Christ could not destroy the Darkness, which remained after the element of Light had been mainly eliminated, and though buried out of sight it was kept in place by powers not free from the intermixture of evil with good. Its relation to man ceased, but not its essential reality as the opposite of good.

Evil, in Mazdeism infused from without into man to corrupt his native purity, is in Manichæism an organic part of him from the beginning, a principle developing itself in conjunction with good, the darkness that ever co-exists with the light; not the work of a personal tempter, not the product of a fall from obedience. If this antagonism



exists, reasoned Mani, how should it come but from the nature of things? A personal Will cannot have created good and evil, since its very life is in being conformed to one or the other. Neither can it end the evil which it did not create, except so far as to separate the good which is imprisoned in evil, and leave the last a barren principle of darkness, self-existing but inoperative on man. Behind all plans and purposes lies the unchangeable nature of things. It is the natural tendency of evil to mingle with good, and imprison it; of good, to escape the evil mingled with it, into purity and freedom. Hence a universe whose imperfect and struggling condition represents these opposing forces. And of these man is the product,—an imprisoned light-essence, involved in darkness, seeking its native element, aided by the whole world of Light, held back by the whole world of Darkness,—who at length through the pervasion of the whole universe by the all-mastering suffering of the soul of Humanity, as the Son of Man, is delivered from the bondage of the night into the liberty of eternal day. And thus, though the strife is dramatically set forth, and every stage is crowded with stirring and strenuous Will, though every cosmic force centres in a living conscious energy,—in Æons and emanations and spiritual powers,—and the speech of the whole is one mighty symbolism of spirit and matter, of the senses and the soul, still every step is predetermined, not by any monarchical scheme, but by the antagonisms and masteries of Nature. The light must free itself from the darkness, because each is what it is. No personal favoritism alters the course of Nature. According as each man is in relation to this supreme law of spiritual progress, so is his fate. This stands in place of election and reprobation; this, not the Bible or the Gospels, is the revelation; this, not the personal trinity in unity, is the witness of the spirit; this, not incarnation in a body of sense, is the presence of the Christ; this



doctrine, not his life or death, is the power of salvation. All prophets and gods sink before this. Jahveh is degraded into the tempter of Adam, while the serpent becomes a saviour because he teaches the rights of knowledge above arbitrary commands, leading man into the liberty of the light instead of the bondage of the darkness. The visible Christ of tradition is a mere shadow; the true Christ was not crucified, because the spiritual light cannot, as a principle, be so confined and slain in forms of sense. The true Christ was sent at the beginning, to save the imprisoned light, and is invisibly crucified throughout Nature, so long as the light-principle is not set free. As for Ahura, Mani, though Mazdean in so many things, does not mention him as a sovereign Will, or hesitate to set aside his positive commands, — such as marriage, labor, agriculture, and, in general, reconciliation with the physical conditions of life.

It is then evident, that with all its errors Manichæism was a rationalistic criticism, cutting under church, creed, and established mediator; an attempt to substitute ideas (*gnosis*) for blind faith (*pistis*) and a religious philosophy for the worship of personal Will. This was equally true of Gnosticism in general, of which Manichæism was an offshoot, — the great heresy of the early Church, the noble witness that reason appeared with its radical claims at the very earliest steps of Christian absorption in the worship of Christ. But the Gnostics were never persecuted so fiercely as the disciples of Mani; partly because they affiliated more perfectly with existing mystical systems, Oriental and Platonic, from which they derived a certain prestige of respect; and partly because some of the doctrines of Mani, proceeding chiefly from contempt of the senses and of matter in general, were urged with a logical as well as a practical thoroughness which struck out the whole basis of Christian theology, especially the Incarnation and Atonement, from physical and social reality. Moreover,



other doctrines of Mani very conspicuously associated themselves with what had passed for heathen idolatry,—such as that of a spiritual presence and purifying function in the sun and moon.

A detailed study of Manichæism will show that, notwithstanding its important differences from Mazdeism as well as from Christianity, it was a natural product of those Iranian qualities which we have traced through the races and religions successively appearing on Iranian soil. Ideal aspiration was indeed much more characteristic of Manichæism than the worship of personal Will. Yet both these forms of Iranian nerve-energy had their share in its origin and history. Its recognition of ideal principles as the substance of belief was enfeebled by anthropomorphic elements, shared with both these religions, though by no means in equal degree on its part. Its superiority in the line of the ideal explains their evil treatment of it, while the modicum of personalism inseparable from its dramatic and poetic form assisted it to gain influence in an age which was drifting towards religious monarchism of a very positive kind. Of all heresiarchs, none perhaps stands more in need of just appreciation than Mani. His doctrine, a by-word in all Christian ages, has come down only in fragments and in the writings of his enemies, who took care to destroy the originals from which they quoted for purposes of confutation alone. Beausobre, the one great scholar of modern times who has ventured to deal with Manichæism in detail, was far from sympathizing with it; yet his minute researches resulted in finding Mani in almost every respect superior to his opponents, both Pagan and Christian. It is no slight honor to this despised and hated creed that it should have given occasion, after a thousand years' eclipse, for a work of such rare learning and liberality,<sup>1</sup> not only one of the best reha-

<sup>1</sup> Beausobre: *Histoire du Manichæisme*.



bilitations of discredited names, but a firm and fearless assertion of the rights of free inquiry. The estimate of Baur, though more philosophical, does not give so vivid an impression of the man or the system as this great and permanent contribution to the study of those times. To this I am indebted for a considerable portion of the data hereafter adduced in support of my own views on aspects of the subject into which Beausobre hardly enters, — its bearing on the progress of religion and the problem of evil.

As a recognition of the strife of contrary forces in the physical and moral spheres, Dualism may well be called a universal experience. Its symbols are everywhere, — God and Satan, Osiris and Typhon, Ahura and Ahriman, Jove and the Titans, spirit and matter, monad and dryad, order and chaos, "love and strife,"<sup>1</sup> affirmation and negation, polar forces, astrological oppositions, freedom and force, spiritual and sensual tendency. Diverse as are these forms, Dualism is nevertheless the promoter of pure monotheism, in proportion as it distinctly emphasizes the radical opposition of good and evil. For in the same proportion that it does this, it forces man to realize that supreme meaning which he attaches to the word *good*, which in the last analysis means that which is conformable to the truth of his being, and commands his love and service. In treating of the Dualism of the Avesta, I maintained that it was impossible for men to worship at once two equal and essentially hostile gods; in other words, that strict Dualism belongs to the realm of philosophy rather than to that of religion. In the religious sense, one cannot serve two opposite masters; "For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." There are of course incongruities in conduct and in belief everywhere; polytheism in a certain sense belongs to no

<sup>1</sup> Empedocles.



special creed or age. But in so far as evil is distinctly conceived as a power hostile to good, then, however it may be feared or detested, it is not worshipped as supreme; because as evil it cannot command either affection or respect. So, whatever the form under which good is conceived,—whether as truth, progress, righteousness, sacrifice, or some kind of happiness, — the idea of its right and ultimate destiny to be supreme, is made all the more evident, the more clearly the conception of evil is brought home, as its radical opposite and negative. When what is held to be good is felt to lie in the purpose of one power, and what is held to be evil in the purpose of another, then a dualistic philosophy necessitates monotheistic faith; or, in other words, the former must be superior and substantially supreme, and so God. Ahura was superior to Ahriman, though their strife lasted to the end of the present visible world. If here monotheism was not complete, it was because of the strictly personal meaning of deity, dividing the conception, so that an inferior person could be called a god as well as a supreme one. In a definition by principles, only the sovereign good in the universe can be called God.

In this respect Manichæism was more truly monotheistic than Mazdeism. Its supreme god was conceived as a principle of immaterial light, whereof all spiritual forces of good were emanations. This was "the Father;" Son and Spirit were inferior, divine only as partakers of this. But so entirely did it subordinate personality to essence, that the opposing power of evil, though regarded in the same way as a living agent, was defined as Matter; as if personification of a principle was, in this dramatic and poetic system, symbolical only, — as in the case of Matter it must be. The dualism here is not a division of deity into two persons, but a distinction of principles; only one of which is the supreme good, and therefore God.



But so absolute is this supremacy of good, that the very key to Manichæism is in its effort to avoid all intermixture of matter, or evil, with the nature of God as a pure and incorruptible essence, whose unity it was willing to express by the Christian name of "the Father." This effort is admitted by its enemies.<sup>1</sup> The Platonists, severe critics of the Manichæans, conceded that they had "invented their monstrous fables, which degrade deity, out of a religious reverence for God."<sup>2</sup> As it would have contradicted the absolute purity of good to create evil, therefore evil—which by a large part of the ancient world, Christian as well as Heathen,<sup>3</sup> was identified with matter—must be an uncreated, self-existent principle. This was Gnostic; Bardesanes, for instance, had said, "God creates the world, but evil creates itself." But the Christians, who felt the same instinctive sense of impurity in matter, made no such effort to save their God from the responsibility of having created it. Mani quoted against them on this point their own text, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit," and Paul's doctrine of the irreconcilableness of the flesh with the spirit. He denied their explanation of the world as a creation out of nothing by the will of God; since "out of nothing, nothing can come." The world of light, or good, flows from the nature of God, which is light; but the world of darkness, or evil, can only flow from its own nature; hence both are uncreated; and the good is only good, and makes good only.

The reality of uncreated, self-existent principles was a common tenet in ancient philosophy, as distinguished from religion. Upon the same requirement, that nothing could come from nothing, the pre-Socratic philosophers of Greece held one and another of the four elements to be without

<sup>1</sup> Epiphanius, Jerome, etc. See Beausobre: *Hist. du Manichæisme*, §. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Simplicius in Epictet. cap. xxvii.

<sup>3</sup> Sabellius and probably Arnobius believed this, as well as the Gnostics generally.



beginning, constituting the essential nature of things. So the "matter" of Plato, the "atoms" of Epicurus, the "strife and love" of Empedocles, the Hellenic "destiny" as well as the Gnostic "matter," were principles inherent and primal, beyond the will of the highest gods. And the "mind" (*nous*) of Anaxagoras was a principle rather than a definite person. In the same way Mani, urging the traditional belief that spiritual freedom consisted in emancipation from the bonds of sense, in an intensely ethical spirit affirmed the impossibility that matter should proceed from the supreme good either by creation or emanation, because it was the principle of evil. It was therefore out of jealousy for the purity of the religious ideal that he pronounced matter to be eternal, or uncreated, as to its substance, and its special forms to have been shaped by an inferior maker, or Demiurge, out of pre-existent materials. So Plato is at pains to show that evil does not come from the gods;<sup>1</sup> and is as little the work of man, since it was necessitated by a principle of disorder which the good Demiurge could not wholly overcome. The Platonic Demiurge represents the higher, as the Manichaean does the lower, creative force. It is not easy to see how, upon the recognized Christian as well as Gnostic ground that evil was real and positive, and that it was made effective through the solicitations of the senses, Mani could have so well recognized in any other way the logic of reason and the absolute purity of the highest good. Certainly not in the method of his great opponent, Augustine, the father of Christian theology, who says with Plato that nothing can be more detestable than to make God the author of evil; yet who, so far from freeing Him from personal responsibility for evil, ascribes it to the human will, whereof, as the bitter foe of Pelagianism, he declares God himself to be the absolute creator and con-

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*.



troller. Certainly not in the way of Christian theology, which made God the Creator and Father of all, yet cast the victims of these forces of evil, which are part and parcel of human life, into eternal punishment by the Father's will.

In resorting to the more consistent view of evil, considered as real and essential, that it must be thoroughly separated from the nature of God, and from the ultimate destiny of spiritual substance, Mani was the most thorough protestant against the irrationalities of the Christian creed in that whole line of heresiarchs who founded the Gnostic schools of the first three centuries. He followed out the same substantial ideas as Basilides, Marcion, Bardesanes, and Valentinus, and had many points of sympathy with those minor schools which formed the transition from Jewish Christianity to Gnosticism. In respect to the nature of evil and of matter, their errors are obvious.

As supplying a rationale (*gnosis*) of philosophy, to meet demands which the blind faith (*pistis*) of the Church not only failed to satisfy, but even treated as sinful, they occupy a position much higher than belongs to their solution of this and of many other problems of life. Augustine charges Mani with attempting to reach truth by reason without faith; and this, taking faith in Augustine's sense, is his real glory. The character of his criticism both of the creed and books of Christianity, of the Old Testament and the New, singularly anticipates many of the arguments against Biblical and doctrinal authority which modern science has carried into details then unattainable, and which modern rationalism has found most satisfactory in disproving the genuineness of certain books and the claims of internal evidence. His use of texts shows what opposite meanings may be read into the same words by a system of philosophy, and by a system of implicit faith; but it does not appear that the charge of



corrupting the language of Scripture has any other basis than his choice of those passages only which served his purpose of confutation or defence. His claim that reason was the emancipating power, that the strength of sin was in ignorance, that the power of Christ was in his doctrine, not in his life, — a purely spiritual reality not at all revealed in the illusory body of flesh and blood which men called Jesus, was a complete repudiation of the Christian doctrine of the Fall, of original sin, of compulsory belief through miracle, of exclusive incarnation, and of the whole scheme of salvation based thereon. And the inspiration of this whole effort to adjust the religious traditions of the East to the requirements of reason, was the desire to vindicate the ideal purity and perfection of the Supreme Good.

This is the substantial motive of his idea of a Demiurge, or subordinate creator, applied to Jahveh as the God of the Old Testament and framer of the material world. His objections to this Old Testament religion were based on its unworthy anthropomorphisms; on its bloody sacrifices, which he held to be of demonic origin; on its wholly temporal and visible meaning of reward and punishment; on its circumcision and ceremonialism; on the absence of all prophecy concerning the real Christ; on the absurdity of using its types as authority for belief in a divine commission; on the ground that a maker of visible light could not have been the Infinite God, because he would have been in darkness previous to making it. Faustus, the Manichaean apologist, could not believe that the Son of God should have been first and specially sent to the Jews; nor understand how the heathen should not believe that he had shown his grace to their own ancestors as well.<sup>1</sup> These objections to the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament are evidences of an earnest zeal for free spirituality

<sup>1</sup> Beausobre: *Hist. du Manichéisme*, i. 296.



and ethical purity in the conception of God,<sup>1</sup> similar to that which Alexandrian Judaism itself had contributed more than a hundred years before to the earliest Christian belief.

In the same interest of spiritualism Mani denied the resurrection of the body, — a heresy both to Mazdeism and Christianity; and it was for this, not for his Dualism, that he was put to death by Varahrân.

Let us now examine more closely the meaning of the Manichæan principle of evil. "Matter," it must be noted, is not here what the common speech, still less the science, of modern times calls by that name. It is simply a term for the substance of those forces which men found impossible to reconcile with their moral and spiritual ideal. It was in great degree identified with the bodily senses and their immediate relations to man, not only because of the sensual appetites, but in part certainly because it was recognized that the ideal world is not revealed physically, by observations, but transcendently, from within; because the senses do not really account for the sense of duty and the idea of God. The inexplicable ground of physical and moral imperfection was conceived, with some approach to philosophical truth, as elementary disorder, blind chaotic darkness in contrast with the light of reason, order, truth, and good; which, according to Plato's noble maxim, was only suppressed by blindness, and only needed being seen, to be loved. This is substantially the "necessity" which Plato in his "Timæus" opposes to the principle of good, and which limits the power of the Demiurge to shape out of his pre-existent material an orderly world, and souls conformable to the best. It is a principle irreducible to permanent form, and necessitates evil in man and Nature, whose organisms spring from

<sup>1</sup> So in Alexandrian philosophy and the translation of the Septuagint a hundred years previous.



human degeneracy. This elementary darkness, or blind unreasoning capability of evil, was called "matter" by ancient thinkers,—Chaldean, Egyptian, Greek,—and forms a distinct factor in all their cosmogony and ethics. On this principle as inherent in the cosmos Mani took his stand in opposition to the Christian theory, which had made the Supreme Good responsible, as a personal Will, for moral evil, because defining it as a product of that human will which He had created. As a principle evil was eternally separate from the principle of good, and could not be explained by anything outside of itself, least of all by its moral opposite. Now, when modern thought says evil is a necessity, as the imperfection which is involved in the very nature of finiteness, and which no Will, however exalted, could prevent, or was needed to create; when it says creation proper, a pure beginning of principles in time, is contrary to the law of evolution, and, in truth, inconceivable,—what is it but to reaffirm that ancient doctrine of the "eternity of matter" under a scientific form?

The Manichæans criticised the first verse of Genesis by asking what God was doing before that "beginning" in which he created the heavens and the earth.<sup>1</sup> Some of the Fathers had enough of heathen philosophy in them to reply,—after Heraclitus and the Stoics, the Alexandrians and the Cabalists,—that the present system, terrestrial and celestial, was but one in a succession of systems; that God was eternally producing these; and they added, with less plausibility, that the world previous to this present world was a spiritual one, created by instant fiat, and that it was to this that Moses referred, as created "in the beginning." But it is obvious that this doctrine of successive creations was as far from giving the meaning of the verse in question, as it was from meeting the Manichæan objection to its theory of creation out of nothing. Nor was the

<sup>1</sup> Augustine: *Against the Manichæans*, i. 2.



matter improved by the further attempt of Augustine and Clement of Alexandria to read into the poetic phrase of Genesis their doctrine of the Trinity, by explaining *ἐν ἀρχῇ* ("in the beginning") to mean "by the principle," — that is, the "Word," or "Son of God"!<sup>1</sup>

It was natural for the orthodox advocate to ask how it was possible, if evil (or matter) was so wholly apart from the will of God, that he should exert any influence to redeem those under its power. But Mani could at least have replied that this was quite as conceivable as it was that the Christian God, being infinitely good, should have created matter, and its involved evil, by his perfect will. Moreover, the mingling of good and evil in the world was not an interfusion of principles at all, but a contact and external pressure, of the nature of two hostile and incompatible substances at war, — a mutual imprisonment, necessitating final separation and release.

In the dramatic spirit of their system the Manichæans personified their Evil Principle, as we have said. But their Prince of Darkness was not a form of rationality, for this belonged only to light; nor had he so much freedom and intelligence as Ahriman in the Mazdean system, who is outwitted by Ahura, and sees no danger till it is too late to escape; nor was he so genuinely personal as the Christian Satan, who prescribes the conditions of life and the fate of men by personal presence and direct volition. He is simply the poetic personification of that blind chaotic substance which needs no will to move it, but is itself active, productive, — a push and tendency of things. To give a soul to this element was quite according to Oriental psychology; since soul-life was traditionally conceived as of three orders, — rational, psychical, and animal or material, — and all the world as animated in every detail of element and form.<sup>2</sup> The Talmud also had its Prince of

<sup>1</sup> B. Jusobré: *Hist. du Manichéisme*, ii, 284.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.



Matter, opposed to God. And the early Christians thought that in repelling matter they were fighting off the evil demons, who were its effective constituent force.

But there was a stronger reason for giving to the material principle opposed to good a soul, in Manichæan jealousy for the purity of the principle of good. If evil were wholly dead and impersonal, then, how account for its presence as conscious motive in the heart and will of man? It must have proceeded either from a spirit-capacity in matter, or else, which was impossible, from a capacity for evil in that spiritual principle which was held to be the Supreme Good. And so the dark world of the material principle must in a sense be spiritual, and productive of living forces, which people chaos and make war on the light. The opposite realms are in contact only at the border, and the dark world is at the south, as with the Orientals generally. Unlike their *being*, as opposites, which is eternal, their *strife*, the grand drama of which creation and human destiny are incidents, has a beginning in time, as it has an end. This tragedy is expressed by Mani, as by all religious teachers, in a mythic form, which must not be too literally interpreted.

In this mythus he is consistent with his Platonic idea of the origin of moral evil, not in inclination, but in ignorance; and vindicates the all-sufficiency of light (or reason) to deliver the soul. Like Basilides, and in accord with the Avestan Magi,<sup>1</sup> he ascribed the war to the effort of darkness to find light, led by a necessity to mingle with it. The darkness is not intentionally hostile to the light as light, but simply does not know the light. An internal schism, plainly suggesting the deeper Dualism in the bosom of evil which portends its destruction, caused it to transcend its own limits and overflow into the world of light, not from sympathy indeed, but from necessity, as the

<sup>1</sup> Beausobre, ii. 23. Archelaus: *Disputatio cum Manete*, c. 55.



only relief. I shall leave unanswered the natural question, How far does this doctrine involve what it certainly hints,—the psychological truth that evil, through its self-contradiction, comes to know the right, and sees it clearly, only after vainly struggling to overcome it?

Blindly flowing into the light, unable to hide from it, evil cannot refuse the conflict, whose sure issue is its defeat. Now, the very substance of the human—not the human body, which comes of dumb demons, according to Mani—is shaped from the substance of the Supreme Light, by what the myth calls the Mother of Life (in other words, the principle or power of life proceeding from it), purely to repel this flooding of its world by the darkness, this raid of chaos upon order, this blind push of lower tendency beyond its bounds. So exalted is the human in its ideal significance, in its nature and its purpose,—pure light-essence in finite form!

And when, in the unequal conflict, this finite image of God is like to fail, the Living Spirit is at hand with the boundless resources of the Father to rescue him. The demonic forces are subdued, and many of them bound in stars or in planets, the evil powers of Oriental cosmogony. Or does the choice of stars signify their imprisonment in *light*?—the sign of that crippled condition of evil in the world which constantly guarantees the final triumph of good.

All this is in the *ideal* world, not that of human history. The Mother of Life is the Wisdom (*Sophia*) of the Gnostics; but who, instead of falling like her from the bosom of God, an Æon wandering in the darkness, goes forth to resist the darkness, yet does not enter its impure domain. And her offspring, the ideal type of man (the *Adam-Kadmon* of the Cabala, *Gayômarđ* of the Avesta), who contends with evil directly, is saved by the Living Spirit to the world of essential light. But now a portion of this divine humanity, made captive, is imprisoned in the lower



world, and pervades it, — the perpetual stress of the spirit therein towards deliverance into native light. This is the Son of Man, the "Jesus passibilis," of Manichæan Christianity; the free ideal of which, a portion (or child), is enthroned serene in the perfect visible light of the sun and moon, to draw all purified intelligences out of the world of evil into the gates of light. The Avestan Mithra becomes the Manichæan Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Now opens the proper history of man, — the sequel of a strife already substantially decided. Not a blind conflict of uncertain issue, not one fore-ordained by an arbitrary decree of Divine Will to be half deliverance and half doom, but a sublime foregone conclusion, based on the elements of being.

Out of the issues of that first hostile intermixture of good and evil, comes the visible actual world, — sun and moon from the elements purest from darkness; stars from those less pure; plants and inorganic substances from those still more corrupted; then Man, the actual human race, not the ideal, male and female, with body of darkness and soul of light, in whose composition centres that most pertinent question, Why was permitted such intermixture of evil in all we are and see? — and the Manichæan answer, namely, That something great and good should come of the inherent antagonism of good and evil in the nature of things. The natural enmity of matter to spirit should by their conjunction in man be made to work out the triumph of good. The dark powers, fearing to lose the captive light, form a body in the image of the ideal man, in which they imprison it, ignorant that in the very law of its nature it must struggle to escape these bonds, until darkness should be penetrated by order, and disciplines yield victory over the flesh. This is Adam the microcosmic man, — evil in body, good in soul.

<sup>1</sup> Neander: *Church History*, — "Mani and the Manicheans."





ous salvation by his life or death, but simply to revive the forgotten light in darkened eyes, and show the science (*gnosis*) of deliverance from the snares of evil.<sup>1</sup> Here is a marvellous conjunction, — Buddha's "ignorance" as the root of misery, with the "light shining in darkness" of the Gospel of John.

This was a total rejection of the function of Christ in view of the Christian idea of the nature and consequences of sin; but there was even a more fatal heresy in the denial of the reality of his incarnation. For the pure light to assume a real fleshly body was impossible. The Manichæan Christ could neither eat, drink, suffer, nor die; the Jesus of the creed was therefore no incarnate God, but an illusory phantasm only; the work of the Christ was invisible and spiritual; and the "Jesus passibilis," or all-pervading light-element imprisoned in Nature, was an effort to escape matter, not an assumption of its forms.

To say the least, the Docetic Christ of Mani was not more irrational than the transmutation of the eucharistic elements into the actual flesh and blood of deity. Although he did not escape the absurd notion of a phantasmal organ proclaiming real and saving doctrine, and probably had no clear idea whether the miracles, sufferings, and other phenomena declared to be phantasmal were pure illusion, or whether, being objectively real, they were merely unreal as concerning the light-principle which could not take bodily form, — the meaning of Mani was evidently this: that as "flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God," nor the light-beam of the spirit be cut off from its fountain by absorption in matter, so the supposed incarnation in the person of Jesus was no exception to this law, and that the reality of Christ's coming to save men

<sup>1</sup> "Mani's world history, not Jewish nor Persian, but apparently Babylonian." — Spiegel: *Erden. Alterth.*, ii. p. 222.



was a fact of the invisible, spiritual world alone. This, notwithstanding all the ascetic extravagance we may find in its Christian premises, was at least sounder in its conclusion than the opposite extreme of faith, which broke away from that premise by an astounding form of miraculous personality, and announced this overwhelming exception to be the most supremely real thing in human history. Taking the Christian belief that the visible world was under doom of speedy destruction, and that the kingdom of its Christ was not of it, but of another world,—was not Mani right in counting it an illusion, and the coming of the Christ into subjection to its bonds the greatest illusion of all? The protest of Mani was at least timely as against those tendencies in Christianity towards a belief in the corporeality of God, of which the natural development led to the Christian doctrine of the Real Presence.

But he did not deny an *apparent* assumption of the flesh. He even found a purpose in the illusions, so far as he accepted them as historical; they represented, by way of figure, the relations and duties of those who really *were* bound in the flesh,—the crucifixion showing that man must mortify the body, the resurrection suggesting his immortality, and the ascension his return to his native light. But the Incarnation being denied, there could have been no miraculous birth of the man Jesus, and no resurrection of his physical body,—an evidence of the freedom with which the Christian records were read and criticised in the early centuries of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Faustus, the Manichæan bishop, deemed it the height of unreason that one born of a woman, circumcised as a Jew, baptized as a disciple, led into the desert to be tempted of the Devil in ordinary human ways, should yet be called the only be-

<sup>1</sup> Faustus, Augustine's opponent, denied the authenticity of many of the New Testament books, and referred them to a post-apostolic date. The main ground of the charge brought against their contents by this school, that they were corruptions of earlier writings, was their anthropomorphic character.



gotten Son of God, one with the Father, and Life of the World.<sup>1</sup>

The Manichæan Jesus was that portion of the light-substance of the ideal Man which had remained captive in the world of darkness, or matter, when that soul had been rescued by the Living Spirit and exalted to the sun. This was the "Jesus passibilis," pervading the visible world for the mystical imagination, with the presence of a divine endeavor to ascend out of the flesh into the spirit. "This Jesus," said the Manichæan, "was not crucified on Calvary; he hangs on every tree." In what manner he pervaded Nature does not seem clear, but doubtless invisibly only; and yet, as captive in matter, very differently from the free descent of the Son of Man from his Sun-world to bring his doctrine (or *gnosis*) in a merely apparent form of humanity. But the meaning is plain enough. Man's own ideal life, like the Fravashi of the Avesta, suffers and strives for and with him in every element of Nature, out of which he must wrest his lost liberty and light.

For emancipation was the recovery of a lost heaven, the reunion of the divine light in man with the supreme light, of which it came. This belief, common to all the ideal schools of antiquity and the mystics of all ages, is an expression of that cyclic movement ascribed by man to whatever he holds to be inherent and eternal. Principles, virtues, truth and good, tend through all changes of human experience to bring us back to themselves, and reaffirm for us in the end what they affirmed in the beginning, abiding as they have always been till the world comes round to them again. It is nothing less than a homelike sense of essential relation, of inmost affinity, of inalienable right to truth and good, which can thus absorb all distinctions of time, and make them appear at once as remembrance and prophecy, as what we were at the first and what we shall

<sup>1</sup> Beausobre, ii. 509.



be at the last. The ideal in man seeks only what belongs to it, its home, its nature, which it can never lose but by annihilation. The historical cyclic form assumed by this feeling, the sense of a lost heaven to be recovered, may be only a mythological symbol. But even an age which looks not backwards but forwards, and conceives of life purely as ascending evolution, will not escape this necessity of ideal aspiration to transcend all time-conceptions,—this sense of unchangeable identity with the principles which attract it as its own natural and only home. The dream of an ante-natal lapse from spiritual light, and a predestined recovery of the same, which haunted antiquity, was the measure of its loyalty to the ideal as inherent and eternal reality. Nothing can be more significant than the finding of this doctrine in dualistic schools like that of Mani, which held evil to be an eternal principle; a doctrine which at first sight seems almost pure pessimism. That it was as far as possible from this has already become apparent. For Mani, as for Plato, and for many of the Christian Fathers, immortality implied pre-existence, and pre-existence required immortality. The soul should recover the use of her wings, now folded and bound, and resume the lost power of flight. In ancient thought, the evil of matter was generally combined with the loss and recovery of spiritual wings. On the other hand, the doctrine of evil as inherent in the *spiritual* nature of man, tended to that of an entire destruction of these wings implied in the notion of eternal punishment, from which no scheme of redemption could save. Thus in the Christian dogma immortality lost its connection with pre-existence. It is remarkable that the two great advocates of pre-existence in early Christian history (Origen and Mani), both held to be heretics, though in different degrees, should, while differing strongly in general belief, both have insisted that immortality involved the restoration of every soul. It was



related of Mani that when his system was charged with cruelty in imprisoning souls in matter, he replied that all the lost sheep would be restored to their folds. "God forbid the soul should be lost. It is the lion that is taken in the net by the shepherd who has thrown him a sheep; as for the soul, God will preserve it."<sup>1</sup>

This illustration opens a curious chapter in religious history. There were other ways in which the delusion of a natural depravity of the senses delivered the Manichæans from irrational Christian dogmas, which are deserving of notice. They accepted the outer darkness and penal woes of the last judgment by fire, but denied the resurrection of the body and the millennial fictions of the Apocalypse and the Fathers. Even while clothing spirits in the splendors of the sun, they would have denied that these were in any sense material, or had any affinity with the flesh and blood in which these souls had dwelt while in life; thus leaving the whole question of spiritual form in the vagueness which properly belongs to it. They admitted that death was separation from the pleasures of sense, but for that very reason denied that it was a primal curse, or, in fact, anything but a deliverance and second birth. They allowed transmigration into plant and tree, and sun and moon, as a purifying process, but had no harrowing pictures of pits or lakes of fire for the wicked. They paid honors to the sun and moon, thus happily escaping the logical consequences of their hatred of matter, and erecting the noblest strictly material forms in the universe into symbols of the divine light.<sup>2</sup> But the idolatry of which the orthodox accused them on this account, even if real to some extent, was certainly not so pronounced as that which was embodied in the worship of the body of Christ, as such, or in that of the consecrated bread and wine

<sup>1</sup> Grog: *Act. Disp.* See Beausobre, ii. 338.

<sup>2</sup> For other views of future punishment, see Spiegel, *Erân. Alterth.*, ii. 195-232.



as its equivalent, or in that of the relics of saints and martyrs, through prayers, offerings, and vows. If idolatry it could be called, this solar cult was at least rational enough to take for its objects familiar blessings and natural laws. The Manichæans, however, repelled the charge. Faustus replied to his opponent, "God forbid I should blush for the reverence I pay to the divine luminaries. We have the same veneration for all elements which you have for the elements of the Eucharist."<sup>1</sup> The sun was, indeed, no less than the radiant company of purified souls, in the glow of their garment of praise, ascending to that "Pillar of Splendor" which was to be their eternal home. Origen regarded the heavenly bodies as living souls, shining in the light of good, and endowed with freedom of will, whereby they prayed to God through Christ.<sup>2</sup> But the Manichæans did not prostrate themselves before the sun, nor offer it sacrifices as to God. They did not fall into that image-worship which carried away the Church in the fourth century. They placed an empty seat in their halls of meeting in memory of their great teacher, but they did not invoke him. In their celebration of the Eucharist they used water instead of wine, and were regarded with horror by the orthodox for this cause.

As the union of spirit and matter in the nature of man involved a moral bondage of soul by sense, his sin, in the Manichæan mind, was a result of his nature rather than of his will. The orthodox attempt to reconcile these two almost incompatible grounds of sin by definitions which made them absolutely incompatible, — defining man's natural sin to be the organic, inevitable love of evil as evil and hate of good as good, and his voluntary sin to be the exercise of deliberate choice in being and doing what he had just been declared as being and doing under irresistible necessity, — was rejected by Mani. Human nature was

<sup>1</sup> Augustine: *Against Faustus*, xx, 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *De Principiis*.



far from being wholly depraved. Every soul was forever prompted to free itself from the desires of the flesh through its original participation in the divine light-nature of the "primitive Man," or ideal Humanity. This spiritual essence, shrouded in self-ignorance, cannot wholly forget itself; and the Manichæan could repeat Augustine's noble saying with a clearer right than its author: "Thou hast made us, O God, for thyself, and our souls are restless till they return to thee." For the great creed-maker of Christendom would fain have combined with this endless aspiration in the convert a moral and spiritual impotence which would have made conversion impossible. He professed to find in this morally impotent human nature the possibility of a yearning for Christ throughout all religions previous to his coming, which no rational logic could deduce from the premises. If the Church could hold to the existence of a conscience in face of its own theory of total depravity, surely Mani might maintain its authority in spite of his theory of man's structural relation to an ante-natal bondage to the Darkness.

We must guard against interpreting Mani as holding to the unrighteousness of matter in our own broad sense of that word. It is a proof of the simplistic notions of moral evil in his day, as well as of the predominance of one form of vice over others in the ancient world, that this system gives such emphasis to the sin of concupiscence, as if it were the only or the chief form in which the senses led mankind astray. This was the sin of the first parents. For Mani interpreted the Fall as of a nature which the Mosaic writer himself did not understand, because he wrote in the service of the Demiurge, not of the Supreme Father. The tree of knowledge was a figure of Christ as the true *Logos*; the prohibition to eat of it came from the Prince of Darkness, who sought to keep man from the light; the serpent was a divine voice which thwarted the scheme.



Mani could not have failed to see that physical generation was indispensable to the continuance of the race. But existence in the body was in comparison with his essential ideal life a lapse and loss, since the soul was really super-sensuous. And in judging these now exploded theories of the ancients concerning the inherent impurity of the sensible world, it must be borne in mind that they did not imply the repudiation of all physical relations for all human beings, but the comparative imperfection of those who are involved in these relations. A secular world was recognized to be necessary, as well as a religious world; and since religion itself consisted in the struggle to throw off these implications, there could really be for man no religion without them. Buddhism had its place for the busy laity as well as for the absorbed saint; nay, distinguished itself more than any other ancient faith by the institution of practical good-will in visible earthly forms. Mani was no exception. Celibacy and ascetic restraint from property were in his system also only for those who had consecrated themselves to purely spiritual aims, the advanced believers, who saw and pursued the highest *gnosis*. It is not true that he forbade the social conditions to his converts generally, or that he believed society to be possible without sexual ties. It would be far less unjust to suppose that Jesus, when he called men to leave all and follow him, to divide their goods, and shake off the dust of a world of flesh and blood that could not inherit his kingdom, sought to abolish homes, trades, government, and society itself. For Jesus really seems to have regarded the visible world as on the verge of destruction, and the judgment day close at hand. Jesus preached a practical love quite as hard to reconcile with his condemnation of the visible world, as a full acceptance of secular and social interests upon lower planes would be with Mani's contempt of matter as impure. Even Plato treats the love



of the sexes as evil; his ideal citizens of a republic, male and female, are not allowed voluntary unions, but solely under laws executed by public officials for the public benefit.

It is the pride of modern thought to have rehabilitated the material form in which all human experience must find its expression. The boundless physical and social opportunity, the breadth and complexity of human relations, have immeasurably increased the estimate of what the senses are, and can do for man. Not even the authority of the New Testament can commend the old negations to the lips of modern Christians. But the old religions had to take the world as it was in their day. That ideal capacity which makes religions did not denounce the world which we now see; it rather asserted one quite contrary to the world which it saw, and which could neither receive nor contain its own world. Its necessity was to overcome this world, either by living above it in ascetic separation, or by expecting its supersedure by the higher life of the spirit. It struggled against the bonds of the organism whence brutal possibilities seemed to flow. It was because the sense-world is omnipresent that it seemed to stand so obstinately in the way of the perfection that the eye never saw nor the ear heard. It was the heart of Plato's creed that so long as beauty and truth were seen only in their embodied forms, however high these might be, the soul of beauty, by and through which they were beautiful or true, was not perceived. Not the concrete body but the universal principle was divine. Yet Plato could see that to one who had perception of eternal archetypal ideas, the world would become their divine expression. Philo, again, the Platonizing Jew of Alexandria, was looking only at the power of bodily seductions to blind the soul to ideas, when he said, "Matter plots against the soul, lifeless and dead as it is. For when the



mind is busied on sublime contemplation, it judges the body to be a hostile and evil thing; for the soul of the athlete and the soul of the philosopher differ."<sup>1</sup> "The body," says the Book of Wisdom, "weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things." "There is a law in my members," said Paul, "that wars against the law of my mind." It was certainly natural that the devotee of ideal virtue and knowledge, in ancient times, should dwell much upon the distractions and perplexities woven about him by the actual world, — material, social, political, institutional. "Invincibly urged to believe in justice, and cast into a world which is injustice itself, needing eternity to vindicate its dealings, and sharply arrested by the chasm of death, — what," says Renan, "would you have him do?" In the absence of those practical resources which science has developed in every human relation, the noblest emotions required something more than a foothold in the supersensual world, — even an attraction to the claims and interests of that world amounting to repulsion from all physical limitations.

What has most contributed to the ennobling of the senses, the rehabilitation of matter in modern times, is the scientific discovery that all thought is so closely related to the action of the senses and the brain that the old line between matter and spirit as distinct worlds is effaced, and we are open to the conviction that we cannot honor any form of virtue or truth without reverence for those physical conditions and laws by which alone it can become effectual for good. Therefore it is evident that the words "body" and "matter" could only have been used in the older systems to cover a much narrower ground of cosmic meaning than with us. And it will be found, curiously enough, that those who were most hostile to matter treated the most important material forms with veneration; as the

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Allegory of the Sacred Laws*, bk. iii. 22.



Manichæans did the sun and moon, and as the Christians did the reality of Christ's flesh and blood, the resurrection of the Body, and the Millennial Kingdom with its visionary mixture of physical elements with supernatural and impossible conditions, which involved no less than the destruction of the world. Even the crown of Christian thought, the Gospel of John, did but modify this curious discrepancy; since it resorted to the physical world for its whole symbolism of the descent of the Logos as Light into the Darkness of the Flesh, wherein even "its own" could not comprehend it. And even such men as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, who were hostile to the materialism of the Apocalypse, did not rise above this inconsistent delight in sensuous images of ideal truths. With a few marvellous exceptions like the poet-prophet of science Lucretius, the thinkers of that earnest time believed the material world to be at war with the highest aims of man; while yet every one of them employed the material world as symbol, allegory, parable, or apologue, to express his highest thought. These facts are sufficient to warn us against giving too literal or too modern an interpretation to the old Dualism of spirit and matter; so that it might almost seem reasonable to substitute such other terms for these as active and passive, higher and lower, living and dead, perfect and imperfect.

But we should especially err, if we regard Dualism as atheism. To assume the reality of an eternal, uncreated principle of matter outside of God, while yet finding a basis for aspiration and duty in a supreme principle of good, was not to deny, so much as to affirm, God. And however limited the conception of deity which was not inclusive of matter, it could hardly be more so than that intense monotheism of Judaism and Christianity which surrounded a supreme personal Will with finite conditions and anthropomorphic defects.



The charge of immorality brought by Augustine and other Church Fathers against the Manichæans is not likely to be admitted by any candid student who is familiar with the mode of dealing with heretics adopted by the great apologists for Christianity. The confutation of heresies by Irenæus and Origen rested upon the assumption that the denial of orthodoxy inevitably led to immorality. Even the doctrines of opponents were invariably ascribed to the worst motives, and presented as unfavorably as possible. It is always natural for religious dogmatism to infer immoral results from the rejection of opinions which the critic has come to regard as the foundation of his own virtue and peace. The accusations brought by Cyril and Augustine against the Manichæans were in accordance with this traditional method. They were the more improbable from the fact that the hostility of this sect to the material world led naturally to the suppression of every sensual tendency. On the other hand, it is possible that the Gnostic conceit of being the elect among believers might lead in some instances to fanatical perversion of the text, "to the pure all things are pure." But the danger was quite as great in the similar conceit of the orthodox, whose morals, if we may judge from the admonitions and reproofs of the chief apostles, had also their perverted leaven in the abuse of church membership for vanity and vice. Augustine, who is the principal witness in proof of the practice of horrible and obscene rites in the meetings of the Manichæans, continued to be a hearer in the sect for nine years. He admits that they earnestly exhorted their disciples to guard against sensuality, and that he himself, loving pleasures of this kind, was not willing to become anything more than a hearer, through fear of binding himself to purity by their vows of membership. Nor does he anywhere pretend that they had secret rites, though he brought everything he could against them



in his letter to induce a friend to leave them for the Christian communion. Cyril, who makes similar charges, was the most unscrupulously intolerant of Christian priests. Foolish and incredible maxims were ascribed to Mani; and Augustine's preposterous charge that he imagined almsgiving and other acts of humanity to be sacrifices to demons, is answered by his letter to Marcellus, which begins with praising this person for his charity.<sup>1</sup> Almsgiving seems to have been the duty of the Manichæan laity to their ascetic devotees, who, like the Buddhist bonzes, lived on pious gifts, after the apostolic ideal, or according to the teaching of Jesus, to be without thought for the morrow, like the birds of the air or the flowers of the field. The vows of the elect were at least ethically creditable. They were: (1) Of the mouth,—not to eat forbidden food, nor utter anything untrue, unkind, or base; (2) Of the hands,—to be pure from all violence or crime; (3) Of the bosom,—to keep out all evil thoughts.<sup>2</sup> Was not this the old Avestan formula,—“purity of thought, word, and deed”? According to Clement of Alexandria, who is not friendly to them, their principal precept was self-respect.<sup>3</sup> Libanius commended them to the governor of Palestine, as a people who mortified the flesh and regarded death as a release; who harmed none, yet were everywhere harassed and persecuted. They are reported by some to have thought war indefensible, and music a gift from Heaven. Their hymns, which were called lascivious and polytheistic by their opponents, seem to have been descriptive of Paradise and of divine Æons, of the mystical union of believers with Christ, and contained such imagery of devotion as was familiar to religious feeling in

<sup>1</sup> Archelaus: *Disputatio cum Manete*, 5. This work is of uncertain historic value, but very ancient; and at least shows what was thought of Mani at a period much earlier than Augustine.

<sup>2</sup> Beausobre: *Hist. du Manichæisme*, ii. 791.

<sup>3</sup> Stromata, ii. 20.



their time.<sup>1</sup> In turn they charged the orthodox with having reinstated pagan sacrifices in their love-feasts (*agapæ*), idolatry in their service of martyrs, and the heathen calendar in their festival-days; and even with having retained the morals of the heathen unchanged. As for the charge of polytheism, they might have retorted that the angelology of the Christians was essentially similar to their own, quite as complicated a system of guardian spirits to be invoked, consecrating every object in Nature or art, presiding over nations and cities, a host of saints and martyrs lifted into thrones, and served with sacrifice and vow. In truth, both systems were natural developments of the old Persian mythology, — the one on Jewish, the other on heathen ground. As for demonology, the dualist's belief in an essential principle of evil was not more prolific of satanic powers than the Christianity of the New Testament and the whole Church of the first five centuries, in which the doctrine of demons ruled without an exception among its greatest names.

Here is the reply of a Manichæan bishop to Augustine's invective: —

“ You ask if I receive the gospel. Is that a question to ask a man who observes all its commands? It is I who should ask you if you receive the gospel, since you show no signs of receiving it effectually. I have left father, mother, children. I have renounced all that the gospel commands me to renounce, and you ask if I receive the gospel. I see that you do not know in what the gospel consists. I have renounced gold and silver. I am content each day with the food sufficient for it. I am not anxious about to-morrow's clothing. You see in me those beatitudes which comprehend the gospel. You see me poor, meek, peaceful, of pure heart. You see me suffering persecution for righteousness' sake. Yet you doubt if I receive the gospel.

<sup>1</sup> The song of St. Thomas, on the marriage of the Church with Christ, has been supposed to be of Manichæan origin, substituting divine for earthly nuptials, after the manner of the Solomonic Canticles of the Old Testament. Other similar productions mentioned by Augustine (*Against Faustus*) have been traced to the same source, but without certainty. See Fabricius, *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*.



You charge me with pagan idolatry. Pagans worship by temples, images, altars, victims, perfumes. I do otherwise: and I have a different opinion of the service agreeable to God. I myself, if I am worthy of it, am the rational temple of the Divinity; Jesus Christ is the living image of his living majesty. A wise soul is the truth, is his altar. And true sacrifice is pure and simple prayer."<sup>1</sup>

Here is the Manichee's ethical ideal, comparing favorably enough with the best claims of his opponents. It would hardly have found its way down to us through the writings of an antagonist, had it not sufficient foundation in history to deserve our credence.

The two main charges against Manichæism were *Magic* and *Gnosticism*. The first associated it with Persian origins, the second with Egyptian and Greek. With the growth of orthodoxy, and the conflicts of nascent Christianity with the other religions of the world, the old sympathy for Persia, naively hinted in the story of the Magi bringing their willing gifts to the infant Christ, became transformed into dislike, and the name of Magi, standing for the Dualism of the East, was chiefly known through its derivative, *magic*, the art of controlling invisible powers to forbidden ends. Mani was by origin and training a Magus; but only in this fact was there any color in the charge brought against him of magical practices. The word *magic* has in fact a nobler meaning and descent. The Greeks ascribed it to Zoroaster and his priests, and held it in profound respect. Pliny says the Magus Osthanes, who accompanied Xerxes, "inspired the Greeks with a rage for the art of magic; and that in the most ancient times, and indeed almost invariably, men sought in it the highest renown."<sup>2</sup> "What crime," asks Apuleius, "in being a Magus (or priest) and knowing ceremonial laws and rites?"<sup>3</sup> Pythagoras, Democritus, Empedocles, and

<sup>1</sup> Faustus (*apud Augustinum*, v. ii.)

<sup>2</sup> *Natural History*, bk. xx., chap. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Apologia*, 1.



Plato crossed the seas to learn it, and returning home expatiated upon it as "one of their grandest mysteries."<sup>1</sup> Apollonius Tyanæus called Persia the land of wisdom, and sought the Magi as its exponents.<sup>2</sup> Originally the word magic seems to have been used to designate religious functions, independently of all secret or dangerous arts. Persian Magianism meant that or something even higher. Suidas says that philosophers and lovers of God are called Magi among the Persians. Ammianus calls Magic the purest worship of divine things. Diogenes Laertius quotes authors who place the Magi as fathers of ancient philosophy, Hindu and Jewish, and ascribes to them exalted attainments.<sup>3</sup> It is curious that he adduces Aristotle in proof that they were ignorant of all kinds of divination by magic.<sup>4</sup> Dio Chrysostom says those whom the Persians call Magi were the persons most fitted by nature for truth and for religious wisdom.<sup>5</sup> Philo Judæus also describes their love of investigation; calls them "a numerous body of virtuous and honorable men;" and adds that "whoever is virtuous is free."

It is evident that in the various phases of meaning undergone by this word, we have a confession of the great indebtedness of the Greek and Roman mind to Asiatic culture, and a reflection of complete changes in the sense of relationship to it produced by religious hostilities. When we contrast the respect with which the Greek writers speak of the wisdom of the Magi, and the willingness of Pliny to collect the results of their physical speculations and prescriptions of occult powers in herbs and stones, with the discredit ecclesiastically attached to the name of Zoroaster through the Middle Ages, as prime teacher of whatever secret mastery over natural powers had been either achieved

<sup>1</sup> Pliny: *Natural History*, xxx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiv. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Diogenes Laertius: *Lives of Philosophers*, Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Oratio Borysthenitica*.



or pretended to, and which was persecuted by the Church as the work of the Devil down to the time when the first essays of modern free physical inquiry were crushed out, so far as possible, under the name of Magic or the "Black Art," — we obtain some conception of the power of special religious interests to pervert the historic relations and obligations of the race. But it is important to observe that this narrowness of a special religion does not prevent the laws of continuous evolution from pursuing their way across its exceptional claims, in spite of every such denial of its share in the delusions of the past. In this point of view the relations of Christianity to what it called the Zoroastrian Magic of Manichæism are deserving of study.

There was certainly ample foundation in the demonic world of the Avesta, and the incantations and sorceries to which the Mazdean priests were led by their dualistic experience, for the general belief of the Christian world in the Persian origin of magic in this inferior sense. The invisible realm of powers inferior or hostile to God was, however, just as real to the Christian believer in the mystical powers of the name and cross of One who came to conquer Satan and his hosts, and who had driven devils out of men into swine, as it was to the Zoroastrian, who met the hosts of Ahriman at every turn, and used against them the holy Honover or the staff of power. The pseudo-science of controlling demons is but the untaught effort to resist threatening forces in Nature, conceived under human analogies, and requires quite other than religious influences to emancipate it into positive knowledge and mastery of things. It was as real to Origen as to Jamblichus or to Mani, or to the Chaldean diviners of the Roman empire. It was real to Jesus and his apostles, and to the whole early Church. It was not any special propensity in the Persian Magus to the use of occult powers to evil ends that moved the hatred of the Christian Church to him;



not his mere belief in demonic possession or demonic function in the government of this world,—it believed in these as firmly as he,—but his interference with the exclusive claim of its own God and Saviour. His rival God and creed in whose interest his war against demons was waged was a pretension which made his angels and demons alike detestable. The only difference between the magic practised by the Church and that which it held blasphemous in the pagan or heretic was that the power which both sides claimed to have acquired over the elemental world, was exercised by the one through talismans, relics, holy formulas, and symbols centring in the orthodox Christ, and by the other through analogous instrumentalities centring in a false or heretical system. As the Manichæan inherited from Mazdeism the belief that everything in Nature and human life had its guardian spirit and its ensnaring demon, so the Christian inherited a similar conception from the Judaism which had drunk deeply at Persian springs, and in the time of Christ had a demonology far more minute and elaborate than the Avesta itself.<sup>1</sup> With that control over the spirits good or evil in which magic consisted, Monotheism was, in fact, far more in accordance than Dualism, since it brought the natural and supernatural worlds into closer relation through a common origin and dependence. The Sibylline oracles, falsely ascribed to early heathen prophetesses inspired to testify in the interest of the Jewish and Christian religions, but belonging to the centuries immediately before and after Christ, abound in evidence of the strength of this element in both religions. The Apocalypse of John, pervaded by the magic of numbers, of satanic and guardian powers, possession and exorcism, ministering spirits of all kinds subject to faith, brings Christian Testament and Jewish Talmud to one plane. Every one of

<sup>1</sup> *Supernatural Religion*, pt. i. chap. iv.



the Church Fathers accepted in substance the data of magic. Those diabolic powers, which they held to be in special collusion with the heathen, they never thought of denying as unreal, but lifted them into their mythological series, associating them with the Fall of man and the bad giants of the elder world. The witchcraft delusion of the whole Church down to recent times, the mediæval mania for transactions with Satan about the soul, were but the mighty survival of that early Christianity which down to the tenth century believed that a grand transaction of Christ with Satan, wherein the latter was tricked by the former out of his real property in the soul of man, constituted the substance of the Atonement. All gifts of healing and of tongues, by which sinners and heathen were converted, all miraculous deliverances from evil, all vows to guardian saints and angels, were so many occult powers of good to control the evil ones which swarmed everywhere under the direct command of the Prince of Darkness, throughout the depraved world of matter and mind. It is true that with the Christian or Jew, one God had created both good and evil, while with the Manichæan, evil was uncreated, and a principle essentially different from good; but this distinction, which might be expected to give to Christian supernaturalism a better hope of converting the powers of evil, and so inspire its magic with a nobler spirit, produced no such effect. The Mazdean looked for the final conversion of demons; the Manichæan, for something very like their annihilation, leaving a barren principle of darkness only; the Christian was satisfied only with their eternal misery.

It must also be observed that Manichæism in reality rejected from the three religions from which it was in large degree derived a considerable amount of material for magic. It discarded many of the superstitions of implicit faith. By its comparative freedom from mysticism



it avoided the gulf of thaumaturgy, into which Neoplatonism at last fell. Its substitution of reason for revelation, its aim at an intellectual elevation above physical miracles, its repulsion of all contact with evil, or matter, as a principle eternally separate from spirit, were of themselves tendencies hostile to the coarse passion for wonder-working so prevalent in the early Christian ages. It was on these very grounds that Mani was persecuted by the great religions out of which he had gathered so much for his own. He became the victim of Sassanide intolerance because he denied that typical form of magic on which Zoroastrian rites were founded,—the resurrection of the body; and his followers were everywhere hunted down by the Christians, because they would not believe the Supreme God to have been born of a virgin and imprisoned in a body of real flesh and blood. Yet because he could not fully emancipate himself from the Christian tradition and creed, he sought to reconcile them with his loftier conception of the Infinite by the only possible theory, that of Docetism; and Docetism—the theory that a spiritual essence could take a purely illusory bodily shape, and deceive the eyes of men by phantom images of a great life and death—was to accept the doctrine of magic in one form at least, and that the completest.

Notwithstanding this common ground of Christian and Heathen in the conception of angelic and demonic powers, the earliest recorded hate of the apostles of Christ was directed against the great representative of thaumaturgy in their vicinity,—Simon of Gitton, otherwise called “Simon Magus.” His pretences to exercise magical powers over Nature apart from the name and following of Jesus so stirred the Christian imagination of the first four centuries that he became a gigantic nebulosity of legend. He was a master of magic powers,<sup>1</sup> the favorite of de-

<sup>1</sup> See especially the *Clementine Recognitions*, ii. 9.



mons, and instigated by them to proclaim himself a god. He succeeded in causing himself to be "worshipped as the first god," and "in persuading men that he should never die."<sup>1</sup> He caused himself to be buried alive, in expectation that he would rise on the third day.<sup>2</sup> He was the founder and father of all the great heretical schools which went under the name of Gnostics.<sup>3</sup> He was the teacher of every kind of vice. He was the pest of mankind, and his godhood was dethroned by Peter at Rome.<sup>4</sup> The doctrines of this theological monster, if we may form a judgment from the confused exposition of his "gospel" by Irenæus and Hippolytus, neither of whom seems to have had either the disposition or the power to unfold its meaning, contained nothing to justify all this denunciation. It must have been an evolution of psychological attributes from the idea of God conceived as the immutable, eternal, yet forever self-projecting reality;<sup>5</sup> and this dramatically and allegorically presented as a descending series, ending in the latest revelation, through himself, for making the universe one in God and emancipating the human soul from material bonds. He was eclectic, and held heathen teaching to be sufficient without Christ, if rightly understood.<sup>6</sup> Of any dualistic theory, or special demonic system, even his enemies seem to have brought no charge; but every feature of later Gnosticism, Demiurgism, and Docetism especially, was seen reflected in its germs in the Samaritan Antichrist, whose chief sins seem to have been, "interpreting the books of Moses as he pleased,"<sup>7</sup> and usurping the place of Jesus as image of God.<sup>8</sup> The sin of Simon is

<sup>1</sup> This charge of claiming to be God is elaborated in the pseudo *Clementine Recognitions*, a romance of the third century, bk. ii. Justin Martyr: *Apology*, i. 26, 56. Origen: *Philosophy*, vi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Hippolytus: *Philosophy*, vi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Irenæus: *Against Heresies*, bk. i. Eusebius: *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius, ii. 13, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Hippolytus: *Philosophy*, vi. 1, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Matter: *Histoire critique du Gnosticisme*, ii. iii.

<sup>7</sup> Hippolytus: *Philosophy*, vi. v. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Irenæus, i. 23.



not apparent to critical study. To the eyes of Paul and Peter, according to the Book of Acts, it consisted in conceiving the power of Christ as working miracles through them for mercenary motives; and in mistaking their gift of healing for a magic secret which he wanted to buy. But the story refutes itself. Simon could have seen no miracle wrought by the apostles; and if he saw anything which they claimed to be miraculous, it could only have been something akin to magical illusion, and involves them in the very delusion they would fasten upon him. His doctrine of a fallen Æon whom his ministry was to restore to the Pleroma of God, and in her the world, led to the story of his leading about a reformed prostitute, — according to some, far from reformed, — whom he styled “the lost sheep;”<sup>1</sup> and still further, to charges of licentiousness against his whole school.<sup>2</sup> Yet it was conceded that Simon had redeemed this Helena from slavery.<sup>3</sup> To take her with him as a type of that divine power which he wished to deliver in every soul, might be the act of a lunatic in our days, but certainly no more implied improper relations than did similar typical actions recorded of the Hebrew prophets; and her presence might have served to emphasize his doctrine and to illustrate its practical power over conduct. If, as the Fathers assert, it was his purpose to counterfeit or rival Jesus, he could point to a prototype, beyond all suspicion of guilt, in the female friend out of whom the Messiah had cast seven devils, and who loved to sit at his feet. Nor was any type of sin and recovery more frequently employed in those days than the sexual one. It was an “adulterous and sinful generation,” which the Messiah was to redeem.

Whether Simon's thaumaturgic gifts were exercised, if he possessed them, in the interest of his own claims to be

<sup>1</sup> Hippolytus: *Philosophy*, vi. 1, 19. Irenæus, i. 23. Matthew, xviii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Hippolytus: *Philosophy*, vi. 1, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Irenæus, i. 23.



the Paraclete or Advocate, or in some other way the power of God, may be difficult to determine. But the evidence of his imposture comes entirely from his enemies; and there seems to be no more reason for crediting it than for regarding the whole great Gnostic movement of the first four centuries as imposture, as the same writers would have us believe that it was. Whatever motives his religious claim may have supplied, they were not necessarily selfish ones, any more than those which are represented as actuating the apostles of the Book of Acts. Their magic was of a character similar to his, — it was a means of proving supernatural gifts as the prerogative of believers in Christ. But the magic of the Gnostics generally, and of Mani in particular, was a part of their psychological symbolism; it ascribed to certain elements in Nature constant virtues and vices as inherent in their being, according to that essential Dualism which was the law of the universe. It was therefore of the nature of science as much as of superstition; or rather it was incipient science in the leading-strings of superstition.

In this point of view it was the precursor of that "magic" which enclosed the germs of modern science during the Middle Ages, — that original study of physical Nature which was persecuted by the Church because it foreshadowed some other solution of the problems of life, some other salvation for the mind of man, than the Christian Trinity and Atonement. It is true that in common with the Church, Manichæism had rejected the material world; not, however, as under the curse of God, but as proceeding from a principle antagonistic to God. But it had at least subordinated arbitrary will to positive principles and laws, and sought to test the books and traditions of religious belief by them, in the name of reason. And it was in a similar though more consistent spirit that the fathers of modern science faced the curse that "revealed



religion" laid upon Nature, and with earnest faith in freedom and in law strove to rehabilitate man's dwelling-place, as the Manichæans had sought to deanthropomorphize God. This was the forbidden magic with which they confronted the magic, or miracle, of papal consecrations and holy signs and talismans, which for centuries gathered about the pious trust and daily life of men. As the Gnostic traced his hierarchy of psychological Æons from the highest spirit down to the lowest emanation, and made religion consist in the restoration of their unity in God, so these new Gnostics of Nature carried the purpose a step farther, and strove to bring about the unity of the physical and spiritual cosmos, as the Gnostic had done with the spiritual alone. Astrology and alchemy — the magic, not of stars and metals only, but of all elements — were inspired by the idea that all things are in natural sympathetic relation, — from the atom to the perfect soul; that lines of dynamic influence are traceable through correspondent forms, and that the power to bring forth ideal fruits from these hitherto unexplored relations was to be secured by the right knowledge of their inherent laws and unselfish obedience to their commands. Ignorant as children, they took fanciful resemblances for real relations; but they anticipated many scientific truths, and were led by that first condition of science, — the instinct of the permanent and universal. The instant this trust in Nature as the great teacher appeared, it was treated by the Church as an alien and rival authority; and for this reason, — the Church rested upon exclusive Will; science rested upon positive natural law. The supernatural magic of the Church aimed at the destruction of the natural magic of the scientist, as it had a thousand years before at the natural magic of the heretic and heathen, who put their thaumaturgy against its miracles; and so the birthday of our liberty saw the martyrdom of its prophets as masters of the "Black



Art." But persecuted "magic" has evolved modern science, and science has in turn exorcised the Church. It is noticeable, therefore, that in this hated name of magic, preserving the memory of Zoroaster and his priesthood, has descended a flame of freedom which the Aryan kindled, three thousand years ago, on the heights of Iran, for his struggle against the powers of darkness in the name of Ahura, the self-created light. The word acquired a nobler meaning with time. The darkness which the mediæval Magus had to master was ignorance, ecclesiasticism, a theology of arbitrary will and slavish fear. The Dualism of the Persian is lost in a strife of powers deeper than that which divided Ormuzd from Ahriman, or the believer in two hostile principles from the believer in one All-creating God.

A modern writer,<sup>1</sup> using the word in its supernatural sense, regards magic as a result of Dualism. If he is right, it cannot be that the Dualism from which magic results is a belief in two gods instead of one; but rather some such recognition of the power of evil in life and the world as belonged to Christian monotheism in common with what is commonly supposed to have been Dualism proper,—the religion of the Avesta. Christianity, in its conception of evil, simply put God and Lucifer for Ahura and Ahriman. But it did not merely inherit that conception from Persia,—it seized and developed it. The implication of Ahriman in creation was more than equalled by the master-stroke of Satan in effecting the full surrender of mankind through Adam's fall to a metaphysical hatred of good far beyond the simple ethical conceptions of the Avesta. This monotheistic Dualism extended the sovereignty of evil into eternal relations, making hell a positive permanent fact, which the Avesta did not do. The New Testament really gives more scope to the Prince of Darkness than the Bundesh.

<sup>1</sup> Rydberg : *Magic of Middle Ages*.



The Church of One God was more dualistic than the doctrine of Two Principles. It believed in the existence of the "father of lies and the founder of oracles" as absolutely as in that of the Father of Jesus. Early Christianity regarded the whole heathen world as diabolic. Catholics added all heretics to the category, and the female sex in special, burning millions at the stake for sorcery. The Reformers added all past Catholicism to the list; and Luther, who had the sharpest eyes for devils of any man in his day, held the Church, as an institution, to have been an invention of Satan. So that a monotheistic religion has actually made the whole history of man a diabolic drama,<sup>1</sup> which the Incarnation alone illumines with its Divine interference. Scarcely a voice was raised in orthodox Christendom for centuries against those horrible practical deductions from the dogma of depravity and the power of Satan over Nature and man which were bathing all Europe in innocent blood. It cannot be pretended that Dualism proper, according to the common meaning of that term, is more guilty than monotheism of the barbarous forms of belief in magic as the instrument of evil. Nothing could more clearly show that man's treatment of the problem of moral evil is independent of the lines which separate positive religions, than to compare the superstitious precepts and customs prevailing in mediæval Christianity on this subject, — the omens and precautions and anathemas relating to witchcraft and sorcery, with those of a similar nature in the Avesta. It would be found that the former list largely outnumbers the latter, and reaches through the details of life with at least equal thoroughness.<sup>2</sup> The popular notion that heathenism is responsible for Christian magic is therefore an error.

The Christian sense of the power of evil, like the Christian doctrine of eternal punishment, was in fact the recoil

<sup>1</sup> Rydberg: *Magic of Middle Ages*, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 210, 211.



of man's conscience from nature in himself and the world, which in Christianity took the form of self-contempt and self-rejection, which turned the back upon the whole past of human progress, and laid the whole burden of human misery on the constitution of Nature and the soul; whose great interpreter for ages has been that strange compend of the savage and the saint, that child of African passion and Roman legalism, — Augustine.

The historical development of Dualism under the monotheistic system of Christianity deserves closer treatment. Under this system, evil is either directly the result of God's will, — that is, He is alike the creator of good and evil; or else indirectly, — that is, through the free will which he has bestowed on man, with full knowledge of the consequences of the gift. The former of these solutions was derived from Judaism, which had imbibed from Mazdeism in the Captivity the distinct personality of an adversary, — Satan, as the inciter to wickedness, appearing for the first time in the post-exilian Book of Chronicles.<sup>1</sup> The growth of Jewish demonology was extremely rapid; and its fallen angels, its swarming devils, its hierarchy of evil powers, pervading the worship of Jahveh, went over bodily into Christianity, which was really but a reform in the bosom of Judaism, working over its higher and lower elements in the interest of individuality and ethical purity. It ascribed to Satan, the roaring lion, the father of lies, all diseases of mind and body, all heathen dogmas, rites, and conduct. If, as many modern Christians suppose, Jesus did not believe in such a personal enemy to God and good, why the repeated allusion to him, in the Temptation, and in the expulsion of demons, while Jesus is nowhere presented as rebuking the almost universal belief of his countrymen in such a power? What idea Jesus had of his origin or of the extent of his power nowhere appears, except that he

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chronicles, xxi. Compare 2 Kings, xxiv.



believed him subject to the power of God, and through God to his own. But Paul distinctly adheres to the old Jewish idea that Jahveh is the creator of evil in man, as the potter moulds his clay.<sup>1</sup> The Christian Fathers had the harder task of reconciling their Christian monotheism with the existence of this inconvertible evil Will, whose power over man was due to a corresponding tendency in the will of man. In Satan and in man evil was traceable, not to the will of God, but to disobedience and revolt in their own wills; as, however, they were created and endowed by the omniscience of God, evil was indirectly his work. Lactantius in the fourth century, in fact, speaks of God as creating two spirits, — one that should hold to good, and one that should fall and become evil;<sup>2</sup> showing that Christian monotheism moved in the same track with Persian Dualism. And this was the primitive doctrine which went on demonizing the creed and conduct of the Middle Ages, overturning all reason by the internecine conflict of God and the Devil. Hermogenes, a Christian Father in the second century, who anticipated Mani, making matter eternal and the source of evil, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, who did the same, still threw evil back on God, as creator of matter from eternity.

Out of that primitive doctrine which connected evil indirectly with God as conscious creator of the will and its results, came the Christian article of original sin and its expiation. The attempt to escape the revolting consequences of this belief, the monstrosity of ascribing sin deserving infinite wrath to the purest as well as to the worst of mankind, led to Origen's kindly semi-Platonic theory of antenatal sin,—a weak shifting back of the tragedy of Adam's fall, without accounting for it. But the old logical necessity of throwing the whole responsi-

<sup>1</sup> Romans, ix. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutiones Divinæ*, li. 8. Hauteville: *Morale et l'Eglise*, p. 22.



bility for evil on Him who made man free to choose it, was not to be escaped in this way. Equally vain was the theory that Adam and Eve were created pure; for how could that be, if they had received a capacity for sin which made them able to involve all their posterity in total depravity and eternal wrath, and to curse the world with physical death and moral impotence, so that the incarnation of God, the atonement, and redemption through Christ became necessary? How could the very first act of pure beings involve such immeasurable crime and consequence as Augustine saw in that earliest exercise of free will? No such prodigy was wrought out of the first disobedience, in the Bundeshesh; none out of the fall of Yima, in the Avesta. This was the terrible triumph of Evil in a more intensely monotheistic faith.

This monstrous deduction was slowly evolved. Neither the Gospels nor Paul reached it.<sup>1</sup> The older Fathers generally admit the counteracting power of free-will to save, as it had wounded, man,—some, like Mani, laying sin at the door of eternal matter as “the flesh.” It was in the fifth century that the consequences of the theory burst into full flower in Augustine, whose protest against Pelagius argued logically that the denial of an utter perversion and ruin of the will through Adam’s sin struck at the foundations of the Christian system by taking away the necessity for atonement and salvation by Christ. Nothing could serve the purpose but the conjunction of absolute impotence of man for good, and eternal wrath against him for doing evil, as results of the free-will which God himself had given him. What premise of human thought has ever brought such monstrous results from the act of an omnipotent Will, bestowing on its children the power of free choice involved in its own being?

Yet this is the natural result of the theory which traces

<sup>1</sup> Romans, v. 12, is mistranslated. Hauteville, p. 33.



evil to a personal will. Such a theory cannot solve the problem. Epicurus stated the case fairly when he said:

"Either God wishes to abolish evil and cannot, and then He is not omnipotent;

"Or He cannot and does not wish to, and then He is both imperfect and wicked;

Or He can and does not wish to, and then He is wicked;

Or He both wishes to and can, and if so, How comes evil to exist at all?"

That which is worshipped as infinite in its perfection must also be infinite in its perversion; and the tracing of evil to so pervertible a thing as will in God or man must issue in some such exaggerated conclusion as the orthodox dogma above stated. In the same way, man's free-will being made responsible for evil, the issue will be an absolute denial of all human responsibility whatever. And this step is taken in the Augustinian doctrine of divine "Decrees from all Eternity." It comes to this, and this only: at the beginning, as at the end, God alone is responsible for sin. One infinite personal Will in the universe excludes all other responsibility for the results.

It would have been better to remember Bion's saying, "that God's punishing the children for the sin of their fathers is like a physician giving medicine to the son or grandson of his patient."<sup>1</sup> It were wiser, surely, not to exalt a personal Will to the throne of the universe, if the conditions are that it shall behave irrationally in propagating its own freedom.

Men have reached a solution of evil which is not complicated by theological difficulties like these, by confining themselves to the facts of human consciousness; a solution which rests on natural and necessary relations, the only real rest for the spirit of man,—not on the contingencies of will. The Stoic Chrysippus said, that in the nature of

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch; *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*, xix.



things evil is necessary to good; that the knowledge of good involves the knowledge of its opposite; and Euripides has the same idea. That evil is good in the making is the foundation of the great consolations of the ancient teachers, and stands by virtue of that conduct which of itself makes good the law. The thinker sees that evil must exist, if only as imperfection, as the condition of progress, as the correlative of that finiteness which is the ground of all individual being. The war against evil, moral and physical, is the education of all greatness and all goodness; and power is measured by resistance. Evil is the contrast of the actual stage on which we stand, with the ideal; which represents a ceaseless advancing power in man to become at one with the universe and its divine order. Only this abiding hope of the ideal as the goal can make endurance of the steps possible. The dark side of Nature and life cannot be justified as we justify the works or ways of personal will. No conscious moral foresight or choice can be rationally conceived as devising or intending the wrong and suffering which have befallen the innumerable millions of mankind. No anthropomorphic deity can stand under the burden of such responsibility. The Platonic Demiurge, commissioned to organize and shape the necessities of crude substance into a perfect cosmos of souls and bodies, working it all out teleologically, a pure system of final causes, is a confessed failure, and Plato does not allow his responsibility for the evil of the world. The whole theology of a fore-and-after-looking, predetermining God, a time-conditioned demiurgic will, breaks down before the problem of evil which attends every step of human and even cosmic growth. The Life of the Universe, the unity of substance, to which alone belongs the highest Name, is wholly incommensurate with the necessary moulds of finite consciousness, the limited phenomenal relations of time and space. Whatever mythological



forms of speech may be unavoidable in religion, the perplexities which beset this fact of evil, especially in its moral aspect, will only be multiplied with the advance of knowledge, so long as we attempt to explain it by a divine power acting by intention, motive, purpose, after the manner of men. No wiser are we, with all our religious systems, than that oldest of true philosophers, Xenophanes, who taught the Greeks that truth lay beyond their mythic tales of the gods, and sought to hint what none can yet express: "God is not like to mortals, in body or mind, since with the whole of him he sees, with the whole of him he thinks, with the whole of him he hears, forever abiding the same." Till we can comprehend essential Being, eternal Substance, let us not impose upon it the conditions of human will. The highest philosophy is to know the laws of our being in themselves; the highest religion is to trust them as the best, because they are our nature; the highest morality is to work loyally upon the facts of life, transforming them into the liberty and humanity of the ideal; and where we cannot do this, to accept our limits without losing our faith and hope in the best. There is great help towards this achievement in recognizing those limits in ourselves which we refrain from ascribing to God as the substance of the whole. As seeing growth but in fragments; as knowing the world not as it is in itself, but under the conditions of our actual stage of progress; as making the world what it is to us, by ever transforming it anew into the likeness of ourselves,—we may well apply to evil the deeper insight of the optimist, which perceives it to be illusion; not in so far as our duty or our emotions are concerned, but in so far as it seems to contradict the promise of the ideal, by covering past, present, and future alike in unchangeable gloom. We have seen that this was the enduring truth in the old Hindu conception of *Mâyâ* and in the Buddhist doctrine of life. Some of the Christian Fathers



(even Augustine), in the same spirit, spoke of evil as unreality, as something imagined by man through his ignorance and immaturity, and passing away in proportion as he comes nearer to seeing things as a whole. Combining this, as they did, with a theological anthropomorphism which as Christians they could not escape, they betrayed at least a desire to save the will of God from responsibility for evil; which they could only do by denying its reality.

To believe in the unreality of evil seems to require a certain mystic elevation of faith; but it is not, as we have seen, without foundation in the facts of experience and the laws of growth. This is indubitable. Our conception of evil changes with our changing mood, our growing insight, our mastery of the laws of life. It changes as we look back on the things that looked so rigid in ugliness, and see what it has brought about, what necessitated it, what compensated it. The charitable judgment that grows with our experience is found to be not charity so much as truer justice; the sympathies, taught by science to enter more objectively into the pain of past conditions of the world or the race, learn the law that ills are relative; that, substantially, the strength is according to the day. How the old severities of judgment, the old sense of curse and blight, melt away with the better knowledge, the freer study of the world, into trust

“that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt and taints of blood;

“That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroyed,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.”